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Teacher Education and Teacher Competencies:

A study of how a model of teacher competencies could inform pre-service primary teacher education in Sri Lanka

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree

Doctor of Education

from

University of Wollongong

by

Sarath Perera

(W. L. D. S. G. Perera)

B.A (Hons.), PGDipEd (Merit), MEd (Colombo), MEd (Wollongong)

Faculty of Education

2003

Certification

I, Sarath Perera, declare that this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement for the award of Doctor of Education, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no materials previously published or written by another person, except that which is acknowledged.

Sarath Perera

14 November 2003

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Dedicated to

Bhagya, Hetuka and Dilhara.

Thanks!

Abstract

This investigation evaluates existing teacher competency statements in the literature in both developed and developing countries. This research was used to develop an appropriate and accessible set of teacher competencies for use in the Sri Lankan context, in particular for use in the National Colleges of Education where primary teacher training is undertaken. Competency statements from numerous sources, and theories of competency-based teaching and learning reviewed within a theoretical framework of teacher epistemology.

This research conducted within a qualitative paradigm and includes some quantitative analysis. Teachers in primary education were surveyed in Sri Lanka to ascertain their beliefs and values about competencies for primary teaching. The responses highlighted two issues: one was that some deep-seated beliefs about what teachers should be able to do emerged; the other issue was that some of the beliefs identified were inconsistent with each other and perhaps reflected some uncertainties about the meaning of teacher competencies in certain themes. In addition, some 51-research participants including teacher educators, master teachers, policy makers and other key stakeholders were interviewed. Qualitative analysis of responses informed the research, with some quantitative analysis of the questionnaires to analyse trends. Classroom observations with field notes provided additional data for understanding existing teacher competencies and perceived needs for developing teachers' professional behaviour, attitudes and values, skills and knowledge in the future.

The outcomes from this research were included the following: the development of a set of teacher competencies relevant to the context of primary teaching in Sri Lanka; a greater understanding of teacher beliefs about competencies; an identification of needs for the pre-service training of teachers; and recommendations for the application of the findings to teacher competency-based pre-service training.

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